

IDENTIFY ISSUES AND ASSETS

Session 4

90 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Youth will identify key issues that concern them and key assets that support them in their community.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

- Butcher paper, tape, and markers.
- Paper, pens, and clipboards.
- As a reminder, provide copies of the *Active Listening Guidelines* (Master Copy 1.1a).
- Butcher paper prep: two columns labeled with the name of your school and neighborhood or city/town.

I. OPENING: ATTENDANCE, SNACKS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AGENDA OVERVIEW (10 MINUTES)

Opening Circle Statement (Around the World): Name a community of which you are a part.

II. WARM UP: GROUP SCULPTURES (15 MINUTES)

Have participants walk freely in the center of the room until the facilitator says stop. Participants must quickly make groups of three or four. Each small group then has three minutes to select an object and devise a plan to create the object using the bodies of all group members. For example: Youth can make a telephone by having two people on their knees with their hands out as the numbers, another person as the receiver; the final member can "make a call." Each group has a chance to show their object to the other teams, and everyone tries



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to guess what they are. Repeat the process for two or three rounds as time allows. Alternatives: Participants stay in the same group while the facilitator names specific categories (e.g., common household items, appliances, something you would find at an amusement park, a type of food). Debrief: What were the different approaches taken by different groups to decide which object to create? How did you decide what role each group member would take? Did the decision-making process change from round to round?

III. IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS (20 MINUTES)

Step 1: Divide participants into small groups and give each group a piece of paper and pens. Have them create two columns on the paper, and label the columns with the name of your school and the neighborhood or city/town. Have adult staff and leaders do the activity as well.

Step 2: Ask participants to brainstorm as many problems they can that exist in these places. Encourage students to think about what really bugs them, or if they could change something, what would they change?

Step 3: After brainstorming, come back to the full group and record all of the issues on chart paper. Compare participants' responses and recall the importance of different perspectives in understanding their community.

Facilitation Tip: Identifying Strengths

Walk around the room as youth work, offering additional prompts such as: What do you like about living here? What is unique or special about this place? Who or what supports you or helps you? People? Places? Programs?

Be sure to refer to the role of personal assets in bringing strength to a community (and vice versa!).

Refer to the Community Webs that youth created as part of Session 2 earlier in this Unit.

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IV. IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS (20 MINUTES)

Remind the group about the concept of assets: positive things or strengths. An asset can be a skill, a quality, or a resource (like money, a building, or a program). Ask youth for examples.

Step 1: In the same small groups, have youth turn their paper over and label the same columns: school, and neighborhood or city/town. Under each heading, have youth write assets (e.g., people, places, programs) that are supportive and important for them and for youth in general and that make their community a better place to live.

Step 3: Share back as a full group: Invite the participants to share their lists of assets, and write them all up on a chart paper above or next to the chart of problems or issues.

V. DEBRIEF (15 MINUTES)

Think: Give each youth a piece of paper and ask them to take a few minutes to:

- Choose one issue from the list and write down why this particular issue bothers them.
- Choose one asset from the list and write down why they think this asset is particularly important.

Ask them to recall experiences that may cause them to feel this way.

Pair: Have youth share their thinking with a partner. Remind them of *Active Listening Guidelines* (Master Copy 1.1a).

Share: Have youth share some of the things they said or heard in their pair. Allow time for sharing and questioning from other students. Is there agreement on the issue that is most important?

VI. CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

Closing Circle Statement (Around the World): Name something about your school that you particularly like or appreciate.

Active Listening Guidelines

- **Empathize.** Put yourself in the other person's place to understand what that person is saying and how he or she feels.
- **Be attentive.** Make an effort to listen carefully. Don't daydream or talk when someone else is talking.
- **Show understanding and acceptance by nonverbal behaviors.**
 - Tone of voice
 - Facial expressions
 - Gestures
 - Eye contact
 - Posture
- **Reflect back** the person's most important thoughts and feelings. Try to do this in your own words. Paraphrase or restate while being careful to say only what you heard.
- **Do not interrupt, offer advice, or give suggestions.** Do not bring up similar feelings and problems from your own experience. Leave out your personal emotions, disagreements, opinions, and other feedback (unless you are asked for it).
- **Remain neutral.** Don't take sides.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Ask for clarification but be polite and respectful. For example, ask "Can you say more about that?" or "What did you mean when you said...?"